[Starbuck Perry]

[?] And Customs - Organizations (Sailors' Home) 2. Folk types - Life Histories And Sketches

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER William Wood

ADDRESS 7012 67th Place, Glendale, L. I.

DATE November 14, 1938

SUBJECT Starbuck Perry, Hard-boiled Mate

1. Date and time of interview

Oct. 31, 1938 1 P. M. Nov. 1, 1938 11 A. M.

Nov. 2, 1938 A. M. Nov. 3, 1938 11 A. M.

2. Place of interview

The Sailor' Snug Harbor, Staten Island, N. Y.

3. Name and address of informant

Henry Perry, The Sailors' Snug Harbor, L. I. N. Y.

4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.

Captain W. F. Flynn, Governor, Sailors' Snug Harbor.

5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

None

6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

The interviews took place in an anteroom of Hospital Ward 2; on the hospital balcony; and at the bedside of Mr. Perry. The anteroom is unfurnished, except with chairs in which sit a few of the inmates of the ward who are able to take recreation without assistance. A door leads to the balcony, which overlooks the beautiful grounds. The Sailors' Snug Harbor, a home for aged end disabled mariners, stands on the north shore of Staten Island, New York.

It is situated on the banks of the Kill Von Kull, a narrow channel connecting Newark Bay with the Upper Bay of New York Harbor. The grounds cover an area of one hundred acres, and are entirely enclosed.

About sixty acres are laid out in lawns, flower beds, and shade trees.

More than fifty buildings stand on this portion of estate, and represent expenditures of several millions of dollars.

Eight main buildings, used as dormitories and mess halls, are connected by corridors of brick and stone, thus obviating the necessity of the Home's guests walking outside during inclement weather. The term guests is used advisedly; for while this is a benevolent institution, it does not conform to the general conception of a place of charity. The old

sailors are treated with due respect and receive every care and consideration. They are provided with all reasonable comforts. The rooms are bright and cheerful, and reflect that scrupulous neatness and cleanliness which is characteristic of seamen, ashore or afloat. Most of the sleeping-rooms have but two occupants. A generous table is maintained and food of excellent quality furnished; in testimony whereof the unstinted praise of the residents themselves is heard by all who choose to mention the subject of cuisine.

The guests of Sailors' Snug Harbor are not bound by any drastic rules or regulations, nor are any of them obliged to perform any labor except the work of keeping clean their quarters. Even this slight requirement is imposed only on the men who are in good physical condition. Men in poor health or suffering under the infirmities of age are exempt. The dormitories are rigidly inspected daily by the 2 matron and her watchful-eyed assistants. The immense kitchens, with their shining apparatus, are presided over by a chef; and a number of excellent cooks take pride in preparing nice meals. The menus are arranged by an expert dietician.

Residents of this Institution are allowed the fullest liberty compatible with good order and their own peace and comfort.

Subject to minor restrictions, they may go and come at their please, between the hours of 7 A. M. and 9 P. M. Should a guest desire to remain away later than nine o'clock, or if he wishes to absent himself over night, or longer, he must anticipate his procedure and get special permission and a pass, which may be obtained almost for the asking.

Situated within its large acreage, the Home has its own bakery, dairy, storage warehouse, laundry, power plant, hospital and dispensary. A church, modelled after S . St. Pauls Paul's of London, and one-sixteenth the size of that famous cathedral, holds religious services on Sundays. There is also a chapel, where prayer-meetings are conducted on certain week-nights and where the members of the church choir meet to practice. A commodious auditorium with a large seating capacity provides entertainment in the way of

moving-pictures and occasional concerts. Many stage-plays have been presented here, too; and, incidentally, the old mariners still sing the praises of the W. P. A. Theater Project and the histrionic ability of its members who, until recently, have been giving performances for their benefit. Much regret is expressed of the discontinuance of these shows.

A considerable part of the domain is under cultivation, and most of the vegetables consumed are grown upon this land. Cattle stables and piggeries are situated within the grounds. The animals 3 actually are bred upon the premises. Twenty pigs are slaughtered at a time, to supply the tables with fresh pork.

The dairy, already mentioned, has its own machinery for pasteurizing the milk, all of which is furnished by the Institution's own cows.

A large staff of hired help includes farm hands, engineers, mechanics, carpenters, repair men, clerks, orderlies, laborers, butchers, stablemen and persons in various other capacities. The hospital staff includes a Superintendent and-two resident physicians.

A registered pharmacist has charge of the dispensary.

The local administration of this vast social enterprise is vested in a Governor who, with his family, occupies a beautiful residence, situated apart from but close to the main building, wherein he has his private office. The present incumbent is Captain W. F.

Flynn, retired master mariner and courteous gentleman. Governor Flynn presides over the well-being of approximately seven hundred old mariners.

Sailors' Snug Harbor was founded by Robert Randall, Esq., of New York City, whose last will and testament—drawn by Alexander Hamilton, on June 1, 1801 — bequeathed almost his entire estate for the establishment and maintenance of a home for aged and disabled -/ sailors.

Mr. Randall's estate, a twenty - acre farm, occupied the site of what now is valuable property in Manhattan. It lies between Fourth and Fifth Avenues, and Sixth and Tenth Streets. The income from real estate on this rich property furnishes adequate funds for the up-keep and perpetuation of the imposing buildings which stand on the ground of The Sailors' Snug Harbor, a monument to the benevolence, philanthropy and foresight of its distinguished founder.

4

Although the will was made in 1801, litigation and other causes delayed the purchase of the site for the Home on Staten Island until thirty years later. The first building was erected in 1831-32, and during the year following, fifty seamen were admitted to the Institution. Since that time, it has provided for nearly [nine?] [thousand?] sailors. It's present guests are ex-mariners of various ranks. Among them are a great many former masters of all type of vessels that sail the seas. 9,000 FOLKLORE NEW YORK FORM B Personal History of Informant

STATE NEW YORK

NAME OF WORKER William Wood

ADDRESS 7012-67th Place, Glendale, L. I.

DATE November 14, 1938

SUBJECT STARBUCK PERRY, HARD-BOILED MATE

1. Ancestry Colonial

2. Place and date of birth Brooklyn, N. Y. 1853

3. Family He has no living relatives

4. Places lived in, with dates Has lived, temporarily, in various seaport towns in the U.S. and in other countries.

5. Education, with dates Scholastic education, extremely limited; education of experiences profound.

6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates Mariner. He made his first ocean trip in 1874.

7. Special skills and interests Unquestionable, a skillful seaman and old-time navigator.

8. Community and religious activities None

9. Description of informant See Form D, (Extra Comment) this date.

10. Other Points gained in interview

FOLKLORE NEW YORK FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER William Wood

ADDRESS 7012 67th Place, Glendale, L. J.

DATE November 14, 1938

SUBJECT STARBUCK PERRY, HARD-BOILED MATE—HIS

NARRATIVE, AS TOLD TO WILLIAM WOOD

Sailing-ships are a thing of the past. Of all the thousands of wind-jammers that have sailed the seas, only about a dozen deep-water vessels are in commission today. A few of

these are in the grain trader, running from Australia to some of the European parts, and I understand that they are owned by one man.

Even now there are a few schooner s in the coastwise trade, here and in other parts of the world; but these don't count. What I'm talking about are the square-riggers: barques, four-masted barques, barquentines, brigs, and full-rigged ships, three, four and five masted. They're gone. And it won't be many years until the last of the men who used to sail in them will be gone too. The fine old wooden vessels were gradually replaced, first by iron and then by steel ships; later on by steamers.

Son, I'm eighty-five years old. From the time I was ten until I got to be about twenty-one I knocked around the water front and sailed in coast vessels. Sixty-four years ago I made my first passage in an ocean-going ship, The Chieftian Chieftain . She was a Britisher and had been a full-rigged ship one time, although she was changed 2 to a barque before I sailed in her. Since then, until I quit going to sea, a few years ago I've been in nearly every kind of vessel that floats. I've sailed the seven seas and been in all the principal ports of the world. Yes, and dozens of smaller ports that are rarely visited by ocean-going ships. I used to sign on chiefly in the capacity of mate, or second mate, or boatswain, or able seaman; according to how good shipping was and how badly I needed a ship.

I was considered a tough, rugged man and always was a hard drinker when ashore. I have had every blanky blank bone in my body broken! My left ribs and right ribs have been smashed.

My right arm has been broken. My right leg has been broken three times, my left leg once. The last smash-up that I had was only a few years ago, shortly after I quit the sea. A blanky blank automobile ran me down and broke both legs above the ankles. Wait!

I'm going to take down my trousers. It's allright with me if it's allright with you. I want to show you the holes in my thigh.

That's where I broke my leg when I fell from the main yard and landed on deck. I'll tell you about that, later. They spliced the thigh-bone in a London hospital, and did a mighty good job. Those dents that you see are where the silver tubes came through; after the operation they left them there to carry off the discharge. They made a groove in one part of the thigh-bone and laid the other part in it, fastening the two together with three ivory pegs, and leaving a drain so that the marrow could circulate from one part of the bone to the other. Well, they saved the leg, but it was shortened by a couple of inches. It had to be either that or amputation.

Now look at my skull! Ever see a hole like that in a man's 3 head? You could put your thumb in it. What That happened at the same time I broke my thigh, the night I fell from the main yard. Look at my right thumb! Out of joint in two places. Look at this finger!

I had the tip slashed and cut off. See this mark in the palm of my hand? That's where a blanky blank foreigner stabbed me. I came near getting lockjaw; but that's nothing to what that blanky so and so got from me. I'm going to tell you about him, too, when I get around to it. What did you say your name was, young fellow? Oh, yes! You told me.

Well, you see I'm pretty well used up. About all I have left is a good appetite and a good memory. My eyes are not so good, and I have to hobble around with a stick. I can remember things that happened years ago much better-than the things that happened yesterday. Oh, yes, Going back to my first sea passage:

I shipped as an able seaman on the barque The Chieftain, in 1874. We made the run to Liverpool with a general cargo from New York. After we got paid off I went on a drunk, and first thing I knew was when I woke up aboard of the Nova Scotia barque John Peacock, and found that I'd been “shanghaied,” and was on my way to Rio Janeiro. “Shanghai-ing” was common them days. Some ships had a very bad name and had a hard time getting a crew. So the boarding-house masters used to fill a few men up with liquor and put them aboard a ship while they were drunk. By the time they came to, the vessel would be at

anchor in mid-stream, or else towing out to sea. If the men showed a dislike to go to work, there was usually a tough boatswain and a couple of hard-boiled mates who knew how to persuade them, and it wasn't long before they were ready to eat bread out of their hands.

4

Nova Scotia ships were among the worst. They used to work the Hell out of their crews. English sailors hated the sight of a “Blue Nose”, as Nova Scotiamen were called. They would never ship aboard one of them unless dead drunk or dead broke. Boarding masters used to reap a harvest. They collected a month's wages in advance from the captain for every man they put aboard his ship. It often happened that a part of this money was owed by the seamen for board; but no matter how little was actually due the boarding-house master, he always kept the whole month's advance. Sometimes he would furnish his departing boarders with a few minor articles of clothing; a couple of pairs of [sox?], maybe, and some soap and matches. Occasionally, if the man was only slightly in debt, he would receive a bottle of liquor.

Well, I'm getting a little tired, Son. I'll tell you some more when you come out to-morrow. I like to talk to a fellow like you. You seem to know something about a ship. What did you say your name was? Oh, yes. I remember.

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Good morning! Why I'm feeling pretty good. Yes, I had a good night's sleep. Are you the young fellow I was talking to the other day? Yesterday, was it? Oh, yes, So it was! What did you tell me your name was? Yes, yes; I remember. What was I telling you about? When I got shanghaied on the Nova Scotia barque John Peacock, at Liverpool? Oh, yes.

Well, when we got to Rio Janeiro, the yellow fever was raging. The people were dying like flies, ashore. We lost two or three of our crew, and most of the others had narrow escapes, As for me, I never had a day's sickness. Some of those South American 5 ports were dangerous places to go to in them days. Rio Janeiro and Santos were among the worst.

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It was very hard for a ship to get a crew of men in the United States or in England, if they knew she was bound for either one of these places. That's one of the reasons so many men got shanghaied.

We left Rio and went to Bassein, in British Burma, a hundred miles up the Irawadi River, to Bullock & Sons' rice plantations.

There we loaded rice for Europe, and sailed for Queenstown for orders.

Cargoes were sometimes sold a dozen times over from the day of loading till the day of discharge. You never knew what was to be your unloading port until you reached Queenstown or Falmouth, or whatever place you were sent to for orders. In this case it was Queenstown; but we never got there.

From the time we left the Indian Ocean until we arrived in British waters I experienced one of the hardest passages I had in my whole travels at sea. Nothing but head winds and bad weather.

To make matters worse we ran short of provisions and water, and ninety days after leaving Bassein all hands were put on short rations.

All hands except the skipper got the scurvy. And he would have got it himself, only that he had a good supply of whiskey in his cabin.

That's how he spent a lot of the money that should have been used for provisions for the crew. By the time we sighted Cape Finisterre, on the North-west coast of Spain, most of the men were so weak from sickness and privation that we could hardly work the ship. The distance to Queenstown was then about six hundred miles, and we still had head winds. For the next few days we ran into dark, hazy weather, with never a sight of the sun by day, nor the stars at night.

The skipper couldn't take an observation, and we had to sail by dead reckoning. The men were so exhausted that they hardly had strength 6 enough to brace the yards around when we tacked ship. We were hoping to make the Fastnet Lighthouse, near Cape Clear, on the Irish coast, and run on in to Queenstown; but we got away to the westward of our course, and the first day the sun came out and let the Old Man get his correct position , we found ourselves about a hundred miles to westward of the north coast of Ireland.

This was the last straw. We were a hundred and sixty-five days out from Burma, and for two solid weeks we had been living on a small ration of maggoty biscuit and a half pint of the rotten dregs of the fresh water tank. The harness casks (Receptacles in which were kept the salt beef W. W.) had been empty for more than a month.

The supply of coffee and sugar had run out long ago. So had the dried peas and beans.

We could see the smoke of a steamer to westward. She was coming in our direction. Just as she was about to cross our bow, one of our men hoisted the flag of distress, the Union Jack upside down. The skipper yelled at us to haul it down again, but no one paid any attention to him, and when he saw the determined look on our faces I guess he hadn't the nerve to make a move to haul it down , himself.

The steamer slowed down and stopped her engines when she got within hailing distance, and her captain called out through a megaphone:

“What's the matter?” Our skipper made no reply. The question was repeated, and one of our sailors said: “Captain, answer that steamboat!

If you don't, we will!”

Well, our Old Man could see there was nothing else could be done, so he up and hollered out that we were bound for Queenstown, out of our course, out of provisions and water, all hands half starved 7 and sick with the scurvy. So then, when the steamer's captain said

he was bound for Belfast, and offered to take us in tow two , the Old Man had to consent. He'd have had a mutiny on his hands if he'd refused.

The steamer got our tow-line aboard, and she sent some of her crew aboard of us to help make our sails fast. Most of our men were too weak to go aloft. The boat that brought them alongside carried enough provisions and water to last us till we got to Belfast, where we arrived about thirty-six hours later. We were taken to the Royal Infirmary where most ?] of us had to stay for treatment.

I don't know what happened to the John Peacock after that, but her agents in Liverpool sent a man to Belfast to pay off the crew, and after I left the infirmary I came home to New York as a passenger. I'll tell you some more to-morrow. No, I'm not so awful tired. Yes, I'm feeling fine. I guess I'll lie down and rest a while.

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Good Morning! Now I'm not sick. I was just lying down to pass the time away. What was I telling you about yesterday?

When I left the John Peacock, and came home a passenger to New York?

Oh, yes. After that, I shipped in the William F. Babcock, an American vessel with three skysail yards. A fine ship she was, and I spent three years in her, first as A. B. and later as boatswain. I left her in New York.

Sometime in 1879 I signed on in the American ship, John T. Berry, of Thomaston, Maine. I joined her In New York. We were bound for London. We made a smart passage across the Atlantic, and were within about sixty miles of the Scilly Islands, off the south-west 8 coast of England, running before the wind, which was blowing up stronger all the time. We'd already taken in the to' gallantsails, brailed in the spanker, and made the cross-jack

fast. Our skipper, Captain Newell Jordan ordered us to clew up the mainsail and lay aloft to make it fast.

This job was completed, and most of the men were on their way down to the deck. Three of us were still on the yard when the main lower-topsail sheet carried away, without the slightest warning.

The three of us were knocked off the foot rope and sent sprawling to the deck. Our fall was broken by some of the running gear, or we should have been killed on the spot. The other two fellows landed clear on the deck. The They were pretty badly bruised up. One broken broke an arm, and the other one knocked some of his teeth out. But I struck my head on the edge of the pump, fracturing my skull and breaking my thigh. That's how I got this hole in my head, and that's how I came to have this leg spliced. Since we were only about forty-eight hours' run from London, with a strong, fair wind, Captain Jordan decided not to attempt to put us ashore at a nearer port, but to take us right on to the Thames.

My own case was by far the worst of the three, and the Captain fixed up a bunk for me in the cabin, so he could give me what treatment he could. When we dropped anchor in the river we were sent ashore in a tug boat. I was on a stretcher, and unconscious. When I came to in the Poplar Hospital, I heard the doctors figuring out how long I could live. Someone had given them my pedigree and told them what a fighter I was, and what a tough bird, and how I used to butt with my head in many a free-for-all fight in the saloons of Liverpool and New York.

I heard one doctor say: “This fellow is a butter, but he won't butt any more.” But I fooled 'em, Son; I fooled 'em. Some hole in my head, aint it?

I left the hospital several months later, and went to stay at a boarding house kept by an American fellow named Louis Nathan.

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It was located in Grace's Alley, across the street from the [Well?] Street Sailors' Home. Louis kept a saloon in connection with his boarding house. He had a couple of very pretty daughters who acted as barmaids.

They were clever and refined girls, too, and many a sailorman got stuck on them ladies. Nathan was a pretty good sort of a fellow. His house was well kept and he served good meals to his boarders. Of course, he took their advance notes when they shipped away, the same as any other boarding-master would; but he tried to make them comfortable while they were in port.

I got to drinking pretty heavily while I was still receiving hospital treatment, and the doctor advised me to move into the Sailors' Home, where there was no liquor and where the rules and regulations were more strict. So I took his advice; and when I was well enough to go home, the American Consul paid my passage to New York.

After a few months ashore I went as boatswain on an iron vessel, a full-rigged ship, called the Tillie E. Starbuck - built on the Delaware. We went out to San Francisco. Half of her crew were hoboes, and I had a Hell of a time making them fly around and trying to make sailors out of them. Maybe those birds weren't happy when we reached the Golden Gate! I knew that some of them would remember me for a long time.

I made three or four voyages with Captain Curtis in the Starbuck, running around the Horn, between New York and ports on the Pacific Coast. At the end of the first trip he made me second 10 mate, and later I was first mate. You didn't have to have a ticket (certificate) to ship as mate or second mate of an American vessel in those days. The master was the only man that had to have a Government License. British laws were stricter; and both mates and second mates had to pass examinations before the Board of Trade in order to get their tickets. American captains of merchantmen used to hire their mates on their reputation as seamen and their ability to handle a crew. And if there were some hard-boiled mates and bullying skippers - and no doubt there were plenty of them, especially in

the Cape Horn trade - you can bet your life they were needed to handle some of the crews we used to get.

Some skippers and mates went to extremes and turned their ships into floating Hells. Many a sailor has been driven to desperation by being constantly picked on and bullied around by some mate that took a dislike to him; and many a victim of this kind of hazing has “accidentally” dropped a marling-spike from aloft on to the head of a mate that was making his life miserable. And many a mate has “fallen” over the ship's side on a dark night, and nobody has known how it happened when he came to be missed at the change of the watches. A good many of these fellows got too handy with a [belaying-pin?].

And that's the reason why some ships had such a bad reputation that they couldn't get crews. As a usual thing, the man that understood his work and was willing to do his duty got along all right, but many of those fellows that the boarding-house keepers used to dump aboard of a ship must have thought they were going on a picnic. They didn't know their work, and they were too damned lazy to try to learn.

There used to be a saying: “He that goes to sea for pleasure might as well go to Hell for pastime.” Some of those fellows found it to be true.

11

Some time after I quit the Tille E. Starbuck, I was mate of another ship, and we were lying at anchor off Astoria, at the mouth of the Columbia River. The skipper was down at Portland, Oregon, visiting some friends, and I was left in charge. We were short of several men, and I sent word to a boarding-house ashore to send me five sailors. After they came aboard I noticed that there were two hoodlums among them who had been with me on the Tillie E. Starbuck, and as soon as they found out that I was the mate they wanted to go ashore again. They didn't have a stitch of clothing except the dungarees they stood up in. I toled told them they could get rigged out later on, from the Slop chest; but they still didn't want to stay, and when I went to put them to work they jumped overboard and swam

ashore. They went to the United States Marshall and brought charges against me, saying that I drove them over the side. They told him that I had terrorized them and that my name was Henry Starbuck. When I went ashore to appear and answer the charges, and when I told the magistrate that my name was Henry Perry and not Starbuck he decided that the men were lying. He held that if they hadn't been aboard long enough to know my name, it was very unlikely that I terrorized them or drove them overboard. That was how I got the nickname of Starbuck Perry.

*_____

Good morning! Pretty good, thanks. My ankles are bothering me a little, that's all. They've never been the same since that blanky blank automobile ran me down. But I'm feeling fine. What did you tell me your name was?

San Francisco used to be a wild place in the 'eighties, especially along the Barbary Coast. All kinds tough joints and dives 12 of every description. Every second place was a beer and whiskey joint or a rough dance-hall. I was on the beach there in 1883. There was a brand new ship in port, called the William H. Smith, an American vessel, loaded with grain for Europe. I was drinking with her second mate one night, in a saloon on Pacific Street. There was another fellow, who seemed to know him pretty well, drinking with us, and we had quite a few rounds. This other chap was a foreigner of some sort, and he spoke in broken English. He had a bad look in his eyes. I could stand a lot of booze in them days without it's taking much effect on me, but I noticed that the other two were getting pretty well loaded, and from scraps of conversation I made out that the foreigner had some kind of grudge against the second mate. He had just enough in him to loosen up his tongue. After a while, the second mate says: “We'll have one more drink, and then I'm going to go down aboard.”

While the bartender was serving us I heard the foreigner say, half out loud and half to himself: “You'll never get aboard of that ship, you blanky blank so and so!” And I noticed

his face looked uglier than ever; he must have thought he had the other fellow where he wanted him.

I says to myself, “I'm going to watch this hoodlum.”

The second mate bought the last round of drinks, and as soon as he emptied his glass he said good-night and started out through the door of the saloon nearest the street that led down towards the wharf where the William H. Smith lay. He hadn't been gone but a couple of minutes when this other blanker swallowed the rest of his drink, and out he goes through the same door. I wasn't quite sure whether he'd been bluffing, or what, when he'd passed the remark about the second mate never going to get aboard of his ship; but anyway, I called for another whisky, and when I'd gulped it down I went outside and walked at a pretty quick 13 stride towards the docks. I wished, afterwards; that I'd started a little sooner.

It was dark now, late at night, and the road to the ship was poorly lighted. When I got to within a few hundred yards of the wharf I could hear someone hollering, and I could see under one of the lamp lights a couple of figures rolling on the ground. I knew something was wrong and I put on speed until I came up alongside of them. There was the second mate of the William H. Smith, down on his back on the flagstones, and this foreign so - and - so knifing the Hell out of him. I grabbed him by both shoulders and pulled him off, throwing him down at the same time. But he jumps to his feet like a cat and makes a lunge at me with the knife. I tried to catch a-hold of his wrist and he caught me right in the palm of the hand...Did I show you the scar? Here it is!

I came near getting the lockjaw.

The second mate was moaning and hollering on the flags, and my hand was bleeding like a stuck pig. But I didn't pay much attention to it at the time; I was too mad to feel the pain. I pulls out my own knife and opens it up...no, it wasn't a sheath knife, it was a jackknife;

I never carried my sheath knife on me, ashore. Well, I made for the murderous blanker and bore down on him with all my weight. I had him on the ground in two seconds. He still had the hand free with the knife in it, and he tried to hack at me, but I put my blade in him first; stuck it into his groin.

Someone must have heard the commotion and spread the alarm, and it wasn't long before the police were on the scene and rushing the three of us off to a hospital. I lay there for about a month, and the doctors thought sure I was going to get lockjaw and go the voyage. The second mate was in there longer; he had several wounds. The foreigner who'd started the trouble died three weeks after he got to the hospital.

The doctors said he'd have died on the spot if my knife had one gone in an inch deeper.

After the second mate was discharged from the hospital I was put on trial for manslaughter. I was quite sure of acquittal, because it was a clear case of self defense, and I had the second mate to testify for me. But there were no other eye-witnesses to the stabbing, and no one by myself had heard the threatening remark the foreigner had made in the saloon. I had no money to hire a good lawyer; and anyway, Cape Horn sailors had a bad name for drinking and fighting, and I soon found out I had no chance in court. I was convicted and sentenced to our four years in Folsom Prison, and I had to serve every day of it. That's what I got for saving the life of the second mate of the William H. Smith; that, and the tip of this finger slashed off, and the mark in the palm of my hand. I showed you the sear, didn't I?

Back in 1890, I was mate of the American ship Solitaire.

In the month, of December we arrived in New York from England with a cargo of chalk. Captain Ed. Sewell was skipper, and he was preparing to go home to Bath, Maine, for a visit, while I superintended the discharging of our load. He'd sent his baggage on ahead to

the railroad station, and was starting off himself, along the wharf, when he turned around and walked back towards the ship. I was on the forward deck, and he hollered up to me: “Perry, I almost forget to tell you, but if you want to see a nice ship, take a walk over to Pier 19, when you get a chance.”

That afternoon I walked over, and there at her berth lay the Shenandoah, just newly built, and brought down from the shipbuilding yard in Bath, by the riggers. What a beautiful vessel she was. Captain 15 Jim Murphy was master and owner of her. She was the first American ship to have screw rigging, the shrouds and stays being made fast with turn-buckles instead of deadeyes and lanyards. She also had a spike boom, instead of the usual bowsprit and jibboon in two different pieces. She afterwards became famous for her quick passages; no doubt you have seen pictures, and maybe models of her. There / were plenty of them made.

Little did I think, as I stood admiring the Shenandoah, and wondering at her fine lines and her modern equipment, as she was waiting to take on a cargo for her first voyage, that I myself should sail in her, twenty-one years later, on her last passage- from San Francisco around the Horn to Bath, Maine. I guess I'll tell you about that when you call to-morrow.

Good morning, Mister...what's your name again? Aint it funny how well I can remember the names of so many of the ships I sailed in, and the names of their skippers, and the year I was in the [them?] , and the ports we went to? And yet I can't seem to remember your name from one day to another, and it's an easy name to think of, too. I guess I must be getting old! Well, eighty-five isn't a bad age for a man that has been knocked around the world like I have been and has had his bones all broken like I have. I'm feeling pretty good. I'd be fine if I could get the ache out of these ankles of mine. Oh, yes. You want me to tell you about how I came to sail in the [Shenandoah?] when she made her last passage around the Horn. That was in 1911, twenty-one years after she was built.

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Early in 1911, I was in Philadelphia, staying at Mother Lanagan's boarding house, waiting to get a ship. She had two sons; one was a runner for the house and the other one was a politician. Every 16 sailors' boarding house had its runner in those days. Sometimes the proprietor himself acted in that capacity; but if he was too busy, or if he had a separate business to attend to, such as a saloon or a grocery or a sailors' clothing establishment, he had to hire someone to act as a runner. This fellow had plenty of work on his hands. He had to board all the in-coming ships — the homeward-bound vessels-and mingle with the sailors, present his card and tell them about the merits of the boarding house he worked for; what good, clean rooms it had, what nice grub was served at the table, and how well the boarders were taken care of in general. Then the runner had to build up a good following for his house, among the [Captains?] and mates. A sailors' boarding house was like an employment agency. When a skipper or a mate wanted to hire a man - or a whole crew of men - he knew that a good, reliable boarding-master would find ways and means to supply him.

So it was part of the runner's job to make himself popular with the officers as well as with the crew.

When sailors got paid off after a long voyage, they usually had a pretty good time ashore while their money lasted. Sailors were never very good hands at saving money; although some of course were more careful than others. I've known of men coming ashore after a long voyage, and having a pay day of four or five hundred dollars; and then going through it all in two or three days, and not having the price of even a shirt or a pair of socks to show for all the hardships they had experienced at sea. Some men just threw their money away, squandered it; bought drinks for everyone in the house, round after round. Other men were more careful and had sense enough to rig themselves out with some good clothing before they started on a spree.

Then there were some fellows who drank in moderation. They had a good time 17 ashore, and their money lasted a long while. Some few others were teetotalers.

The men who spent their money quickest were the first to have to go to sea again. If a fellow hadn't had sense enought to pay his boarding-master for a few weeks in advance before spending his voyage's earnings, he didn't stay ashore very long. It was the runner's job to see to it that he got shipped out before his board bill ate up the advance note that he got from the skipper when he signed on for another trip. Fellows like that didn't have much choice of vessels, they had to take almost any ship that they were offerred, whether she was old or uncomfortable or leaky, or had a bad reputation for working the Hell out of her crew.

Some sailors steered clear of boarding houses. They went to Sailors' Homes, where the officials had a watchful eye for the welfare of seamen and tried to persuade them to keep their money in a bank and draw out just a little at a time as they needed it. These Sailors' Homes usually were located near the principal shipping offices, and they had their own special agent or employment officer who helped the guests find a ship when they were ready to go to sea. There are good Sailors' Homes to-day in all the principal port of the world. There is one in connection with the Seamen's Institute, at 25 South Street.

There still are sailors' boarding houses, but not the old kind that I used to know when I went to sea for a living. They have passed away along with sailing ships, deep-water seamen and long voyages.

Coming back to Mother Lanagan's house in Philadelphia: I was doing a little work for her one day, hanging a door, when her son who was runner for the house comes in and says: “Perry, go down to the William P. Fry, four-masted barque, and see Captain Jim Murphy; he wants a second mate.” Well, I was so anxious to ship out that I 18 didn't wait even to put my coat on. I hurried to the pier where she was lying, and climbed aboard.

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Captain Murphy sat in the after companionway, reading a newspaper, and he looked up as I walked along the quarterdeck. “Hello, Perry!” he says, “what are you doing here?”

“Captain Murphy,” says I, “I hear you want a second mate, and that's the reason I hurried over to see you, without waiting to put a coat on.”

“Listen, Perry,” he says, “I'm not taking this “ ship to sea.

There's another skipper coming to take charge of her. I'm going home to Bath, Maine, to rest up for three or four months, and then I'm going overland to 'Frisco to bring back the Shenandoah. She's pretty well worn-out and strained after twenty years of the Cape Horn trade, so I'm going to fetch her home and turn her into a barge. Meanwhile, I'll tell you what you do. I'll give you a note to Captain Townsend, of the four-masted barque, the Mangareva. He wants a second mate, and the ship is loading for San Francisco. You take the job - he'll give it to you on my recommendation. When you get out there, watch for me; I'll take you home with me on the Shenandoah.”

Well, I went out to the coast on the [Mangareva?]. We made the passage in a hundred and twenty days, which wasn't so bad, considering the hard time we had beating around the Horn that trip. I stayed with Captain Townsend while the vessel was unloading, and just about the time the last of her cargo was out, Captain Murphy arrived from the East and took me back with him as second mate of the old Shenandoah.

When we got home he dismantled her and turned her into a barge; and that ended the career of one of the finest American ships that ever sailed on salt water. [That?] was twenty-seven years ago, and since then 19 all that were left of the fine old ships have been turned into barges or have been broken up. What do we need with sailors to-day? There aint no vessels. Nothing but steamboats.

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Yes! I'd like to go to sea again if I wasn't so damned old. Come and see me again sometime. I like to talke talk to a man who knows something about a ship. What did you say your name was? FOLKLORE NEW YORK FORM D Extra Comment

STATE NEW YORK

NAME OF WORKER William Wood

ADDRESS 7012-67th Place Glendale, L. I. New York

DATE November 14, 1938

SUBJECT STARBUCK PERRY, HARD*BOILED MATE “I remember the black wharves and the slips, And the sea-tides tossing free;..... And the beauty and mystery of the ships, And the magic of the sea.”

My Lost Youth.

How aptly befitting are these words of Longfellow to the recollections of Henry Perry - Starbuck Perry - once a hard-boiled mate of the wind ships; intrepid seafarer of a day gone by. Even now clutched in the inexorable grip of Father Time, his sturdy frame bowed by the ponderous weight of eighty-five years; racked in body by the cumulative effects of a host of misadventures; weather-beaten and tempest-worn by the buffetings of many a Cape Horn gale; he rests among his memories, in the tranquil serenity of The Sailors' Snug Harbor, on Staten Island; [?] strong of hear heart and unbroken in spirit.

Henry Perry has been in so many ships that it is astonishing how he can recall their names, the names of their captains, and the ports visited. His faculty for remembering dates and places is almost uncanny; but this mental attribute of his applies only to the years of long ago, and is in keen contrast to his forgetfulness of current affairs 2 and recent happenings. Despite his age, the old fellow's muscular frame still bears witness

to what once must have been a very powerful physique. Nature has endowed him with a magnificent constitution; and although he is receiving medical treatment at the present time, in one of the infirmary wards in the hospital at Sailors' Snug Harbor, he is by no means as enfeebled or decrepit as are many of his fellow inmates who are several years his junior.

He seems to derive a peculiar and almost morbid pleasure in displaying the many physical evidences he has of his numerous encounters with the elements. Who shall say that the old man is not entitled to this melancholy satisfaction? The circumstances in which he fractured his skull were harrowing enough to kill an ordinary human being. The miserable stabbing affray on the Barbary Coast, as a result of which he narrowly escaped death from lockjaw; and the aftermath, his imprisonment in Folsom Penitentiary: these gruelling experiences might have broken many a less courageous spirit; might have embittered, eternally, a less resolute and philosophic mind.

This old votary of Neptune received little or no school training. He attended only the lower grades. [His?] high school was a skysail yard; his university, the dock of a wind-jammer. At ten he was rustling freight on the wharves of Brooklyn. Two years later he was sailing in fishing smacks and coastal schooners. At twenty-one he was battling with the “rolling forties” in mid-Atlantic. But none who have met and conversed with him, and heard his narratives, could dare to say that Henry Perry is not a well educated man. None could accuse him of being in-articulate; nor of poverty of vocabulary.

He rambles, at times, into the vernacular, and his [grammar?] is by no means faultless: he is a seaman, not a college professor. His stories are savored with a delightful sprinkling of [?] profanity; just enough to add zest and give emphasis to some of his assertions. He is cheerful , friendly and congenial; and his general manner and bearing convey the impression that, in former days, he probably observed all those unwritten laws of hospitality which ever have governed the men who go down to the sea in ships.

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Sheltered at last, from all the perils of the mighty deep, safe at anchor in the peaceful haven of The Sailors' Snug Harbor, Starbuck Perry waits and watches, undismayed, while the sun gradually dips toward [?] the western horizon.

[Starbuck Perry] http://www.loc.gov/resource/wpalh2.26040228